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Representative Tom Burnett  
Montana House of Representatives  
PO Box 200400  
Helena, MT. 59620-0400

Re: Early Childhood Services Bureau Budget

Dear Representative Tom Burnett,

It is my understanding that the Health and Human Services committee will hear testimony on the budget for the Early Childhood Services Bureau on Wednesday February 2, 2011. I am unable to attend this hearing due to commitments I have while being a student at Montana State University in Bozeman. This letter is the only way I can express my opinion and concern regarding the budget for the Early Childhood Services Bureau. It is also my understanding that there is legislation aimed at reducing this budget. It is my belief that this would be a big mistake on behalf of the State of Montana. It would cost the state more money than it would save and create a higher deficit by lowering state revenue while increasing expense.

A lower amount of child care related funding provided by the Department of Health and Human Services would reduce the number of Montana parents that are able to remain in the workforce. There would be fewer residence contributing to the states economy and produce less revenue from state income tax. It would also reduce employment positions in the child care field at the same time reducing city, county, and state income caused by lower business revenue from child care providers. Jobs would be lost, revenue decreased, and more residence depending on supplemental aide from the state.

My family's situation is very similar to other Montana residents. Both parents work and need child care for our children in order to work. If we did not have the child care related assistance it would not be cost efficient for both parents to work. One parent's income would be close to the cost of child care, if one parent did not work there would be no need for child care. Also in my current situation one parent is attending school. Without child care assistance I would not be able to gain a higher education. We would remain at a lower income, fewer people working, paying fewer taxes, and not creating a demand for jobs and stimulating local small business.

With the child care assistance provided by the Early Childhood Services Bureau we will be able to remain in the work force, contribute more to the states income through tax revenue and supporting local businesses. We will gain a higher education which will make us more virtuous citizens and in turn we will not need supplemental assistance from the state. Without this assistance we will remain in this cycle that will require us to be dependent on the state while contributing less.

The ones that will suffer most from all of this will be our children. We need to focus more on providing quality education and care for our children and this has a large influence on the state's prosperity in the future. Current studies have shown that a populous with a higher education and better child care reduces crime rates and poverty. I was born and raised in Montana and would like to keep my family here, but who wants to live somewhere that could be prone to poor education for our children, higher crime rates, declining jobs, and less virtuous citizens. If the state decides to reduce the assistance provided by Health and Human Services, it tells me the state does not care about the future of its' residents and is only concerned with immediate results.

The reference to "virtuous citizens" comes from Thomas Jefferson's vision of a successful democracy. Not all of Jefferson's vision proved to be accurate, but one thing that has been proven over time has been the fact that a successful democracy depends on the vitality of its citizens. If we do not support child care we are not supporting this vitality.

I appreciate your time and would like the opportunity in the near future to provide further correspondence to the matter. I believe if I have more time I can provide strong evidence to support my argument, including statistics and numbers. I also have some input on how the funding for Early Childhood Services could be better managed. I have been a part of this program for just over one year and have witnessed unnecessary waste. I believe the money could be managed in a more efficient manner though revision of certain procedure and protocol. I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Respectfully,

David P. Schwehr

A concerned Montana resident and parent

c.c. Greenwood Academy-Bozeman, Montana Advocates for Children, Sen. Mary Caferro,  
Rep. Don Roberts.